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ABSTRACT

This document is intended to help local adult education programs evaluate their programs to assess their capability of designing and delivering a specific workplace education program requested by an employer. The guide begins with an introductory section that discusses the following topics: differences between workplace programs and typical programs in an academic setting; the pitfalls of adult education providers committing to a workplace education program before determining their ability to delivery a quality program; the program evaluation process; and guidelines for using the appended evaluation instruments in a six-step group process for program evaluation. The first appendix presents materials for assessing instructor qualifications and related characteristics, and the second presents materials for assessing the program management/administrative characteristics required for program success. Each component is divided into five categories. Specific criteria describing the necessary knowledge and skills are listed for each category. For each item, the reviewer must determine whether the knowledge or skill is sufficient to accomplish the goals of the proposed program. Each of the first two appendixes includes materials for evaluating the following aspects of ability to deliver a workplace education program: context; resources; instructional competence; collaboration; and assessment and evaluation. The remaining two appendixes consist of a workplace program planning chart and a glossary. (Contains 16 references and 4 online resources.) (MN)

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Workplace Readiness Guide

A Publication of
Building Professional Development Partnerships
for Adult Educators Project

PRO-NET 2000

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INTRODUCTION

As business and production processes continue to change and develop, workplace education programs will assume a major role in the development and maintenance of a quality workforce. Employers require their workers to have increasingly strong communication skills, the ability to identify and solve problems, to make appropriate decisions, and to work collaboratively. "While the percentage of workers entering the labor force with higher levels of education continues to grow, the pace of job evolution within the workforce is moving even faster. Skills and techniques need to be updated constantly or they become obsolete very quickly" (National Alliance of Business, [NAB], 2001, p.7.). Pre-employment education is not enough. Jobs evolve as employers change the way they do business. Successful employees learn continually on the job – informally, independently, and through planned educational programs.

U.S. companies striving to improve their competitiveness in the international marketplace must continuously improve the quality of their products and services. A high performing workforce becomes increasingly important as businesses attain and maintain ISO standards. The quality required to gain recognition such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is achieved only through a highly skilled workforce involved in lifelong learning. A recent study by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) "finds that the literacy of American adults ranks 10th out of 17 industrialized countries" (Bernstein, 2002). "Unless adult training and education improve sharply," the U.S. will begin to fall behind in its ability to compete in international markets (Bernstein, 2002). Workplace education is one of the best solutions to this problem. These workplace education programs must be of the highest quality if they are to be successful in addressing this problem.

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) (U.S. Department of Labor) published two reports, *What Work Requires of Schools* (SCANS, 1991) and *Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance* (SCANS, 1992). These two reports provide an outline of skills and competencies needed in today's workplace. The Foundation required for success in the modern workplace, consists of Basic Skills, Thinking Skills, and Personal Qualities. The competencies needed for success are in the areas of Resources, Interpersonal, Information, Systems, and Technology. Mastery of these skills and competencies will prepare individuals to be lifelong learners and to participate actively in learning organizations.

The Equipped for the Future (EFF) project of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) (2000), has studied the knowledge and skills adults must possess to succeed in the three major roles of adulthood: Parent/Family Member, Citizen, and Worker. EFF includes four fundamental categories of necessary skills that adults need to perform in these roles. They are communication skills, decision-making skills, interpersonal skills, and lifelong learning. The standards associated with each of these skills more clearly define and describe what is needed in each of the roles. There are common skills needed in all three adult roles; however, some skills assume a higher priority depending on the setting. For example, lifelong learning for job retention and job advancement is critical in the worker role and may assume a place of less importance in another role. The four categories and many of the related standards are similar to the skills identified in the SCANS reports.

The National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) recently published the *Skills Scales Companion Guide* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2000). This guide reinforces the recommendations from the SCANS reports and identifies two major skills components necessary for success in the workplace: a *work*-oriented component and a *worker*-oriented component. The *work*-oriented component looks at what needs to be done on the job and how well. *The worker*-oriented component looks at the knowledge and skills someone needs to possess in order to fulfill these responsibilities. Three types of knowledge and skills are included in these recommendations: academic, employability, and occupational and technical knowledge and skills. The characteristics of the academic and the employability knowledge and skills are very similar to the SCANS with the addition of science in the academic area and self and career development in the employability area. The NSSB publications relate specifically to various industries and serve as a guide to workplace curriculum developers and instructors.

The "new workplace requires a new type of employee, one who is highly skilled, flexible, creative, and attuned to working as a member of a team" (Harris, 2000, p.1). Workplace education programs, built on the SCANS skills and using the NSSB Skill Scales Companion Guide for identification of the skill characteristics, can help employees develop the skills for this new workplace. Programs can be customized to address unique employer and employee needs as well as employer expectations.

"Worker training has become a key component to almost every corporation's long-range strategic plan" (NAB, 2001, p. 7). "It represents an investment in the company's future and provides real and immediate returns via higher profits and improved earnings for both companies and employees" (NAB, 2001 p. 11).

According to the National Alliance for Business (2001), more than one-quarter of companies provided some kind of remedial training to their employees in 1999. This number should remain the same or increase in coming years. The knowledge, skills, and expertise found in qualified adult education programs are an invaluable resource for workplace education programs. Adult education programs have the ability to use the SCANS skills in the design and delivery of workplace education programs to address the remedial training needs of companies and to develop the foundation needed for ongoing education and training.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), July, 1998, includes "workplace literacy services" as part of adult education and literacy services provided by local adult education programs. Local programs receiving these funds are expected to be involved in workplace education programming. The challenge for local programs is to determine their role in meeting this requirement. A local program may take the initiative in the development and implementation of workforce education programs or may play a smaller role in partnership with a more experienced and larger program.

What a Workplace Education Program Is and Is Not

A common assumption is that a workplace education program is a regular education program held at a worksite. That is, an administrator or program planner takes a program offered in a school building or other educational setting and places it at the worksite. In reality, an effective, quality workplace education program is much more comprehensive. It covers skills in depth and context to a greater degree than in more generic programs and is more focused and less generalized.

Workplace education programs focus on the literacy and basic skills training workers need to gain new employment, retain present jobs, advance in their career, or increase productivity. Curricula are developed by educators, working with employers and employee groups, who assemble written materials used on the job and who analyze specific jobs to determine what reading, computation, speaking and reasoning skills are required to perform job tasks effectively. By their nature, successful efforts to institute workplace literacy programs require strong partnerships among educators, employers, and employees.

U.S. Department of Education, March 2000

There are some very specific differences between a typical program in an academic setting and a workplace education program. The SCANS report states "The most effective way of learning skills is 'in context' that is, placing learning objectives within a real environment rather than insisting that students first learn in the abstract what they will be expected to apply." The curriculum in a workplace program must be contextually appropriate and designed to achieve the learning goals of the project. In addition to curricular differences, other factors such as assessment, evaluation of learning outcomes, and overall curriculum delivery formats differ greatly from an academic basic skills program. Other major differences are issues related to: times in which classes are offered, e.g., whether classes are offered during or after work hours; expectations for participant outcomes, e.g., changes in participant behavior in addition to increased learning gains; and roles and responsibilities of labor, management, and students in goal setting and program decision-making. These are examples of issues that must be addressed before a workplace program can begin. A clear understanding of the company, its culture, and its expectations is critical to workplace education success. "Work design, work environment, and management practices determine the scope of a Workplace Basics program, i.e. what skills will be acknowledged and what skills will not, according to the underlying philosophy of the company" (Foucar-Szocki,1992, p. 9).

To meet the criteria in the U.S. Department of Education definition, a significant amount of background work and planning is required. Employer and employee needs assessments must be completed. Outcomes and goals must be clearly identified and joint input from all stakeholders is necessary to ensure that curriculum is customized and focused. Every aspect of programming from planning through design, implementation, and follow-up is determined through this process. Often more time is spent prior to program delivery than in actual delivery of the program. Instructors, program developers, and program managers all play different roles in the workplace education program and it is critical that this is clearly understood before the process begins. To successfully deliver a workplace education program, the adult education program must have knowledgeable staff, skilled in assessment and customized curriculum design.

The Problem with Many Workplace Education Programs

Many adult education programs commit to a workplace education program before determining their ability to deliver a quality program. As described above, they assume that a typical adult education program can be transplanted to the worksite and success is guaranteed.

Adult education programs entering into the workplace arena with insufficient resources, whether personnel, financial, and/or material, will not only jeopardize their own credibility but the

credibility of other adult education programs in the geographic area. Knowledge and experience in areas such as skills analyses, curricula development, contract negotiations, labor/management issues, needs assessment, and negotiating are minimal requirements for workplace education program development. Adult education programs must assess their ability to participate adequately in this process.

When a company commits to a training program, it must be assured that the program will be of high quality and address the identified needs. Programs that fail to deliver the appropriate programming, or that do not meet the agreed-upon measurable outcomes, can cause stakeholders to lose confidence in the program's ability to deliver quality services to their constituents. Therefore, it is imperative that adult education programs plan well before committing to the delivery of a workplace education program. The decision to enter into this arena without adequate resources and expertise could have a long-term negative impact on the field.

A Solution to the Problem

Adult education programs considering the implementation of a workplace education program must first determine if they have the resources and expertise necessary to initiate such a program. In order to successfully deliver a workplace education program, it is critical that the adult education program assess its ability to design and deliver the requested program. This Workplace Readiness Guide (WRG) is the first step for local adult education programs that are considering a workplace education program.

The WRG consists of two major components. One considers the instructor qualifications and related instructional characteristics. The other considers the program management/administrative characteristics needed for program success. Each component is divided into five categories. Specific criteria describing the necessary knowledge and skills are listed for each category. For each item, the reviewer must determine if the knowledge or skill is sufficient to accomplish the goals of the proposed program. Space is provided for information regarding supporting evidence and comments. If the required knowledge or skill is not sufficient, space is also provided to identify professional development activities and additional resources that will address the deficiency.

Those programs having insufficient resources and/or expertise must decide if they will seek a partner with expertise in missing areas or if they will choose not to begin a workplace education program at this time. Sometimes, a program may partner with a community agency or another program in a nearby town that has the needed expertise and can assist in the development of the program. Resources, particularly fees from the employer, may have to be shared with the partner. That minimal cost, however, could pay off as the adult education program also develops expertise. That newly gained expertise can lead to other contracts and programs in the future.

How to Use the Workplace Readiness Guide

It is a good idea to complete this guide as a team. The team should consist of the program manager, at least two veteran instructors, and a staff person responsible for budgets. Other staff can be included based on the size of the adult education program and scope of proposed workplace program. A glossary in Appendix D provides clarifying information for the users.

Team members should review both the management and instructor components and respond to each item independently. It is important to note that there is a space for evidence to support decisions as to whether the program is ready to enter into the workplace arena. Evidence can take a variety of forms, depending on the experiences of the program staff and nature of the program. For example, in the management component, the first item asks: "Is the adult education program viewed as a strong resource by the community?" Evidence may include: letters requesting various services of the program from community and business members, minutes of meetings within the community, or testimonials from community members. Similarly, in the instructor component, one item asks "Are program instructional staff sensitive to diverse populations in non-traditional settings?" Evidence may include: performance evaluations of staff, materials used by staff in the learning environment, supervisor observations, or instructional plans.

When the guide is completed, members should bring it to the group meeting. The box below outlines the steps the group can take when it convenes.

GROUP PROCESS FOR USING THE GUIDE

1. The program manager leads the group through the guide recording a group response to each item.

2. Those items lacking a consensus are identified for later discussion.

3. Once both components have been reviewed, the group revisits those unresolved items. Every attempt should be made to reach consensus on the items.

4. The group then reviews each item deemed to be 'insufficient' and determines what is needed to address the missing knowledge or skill and what resources might be available to assist in the process.

5. If three or more "no" responses appear in any category, the team must decide whether the costs and effort needed to address the items are feasible within the constraints of the program.
   [Note: If two or more items in #3 " Instructional Competence" in the Instructor Component or in #2 "Resources" in the Program/Management component are checked "No", the ABE program should seriously consider not pursuing a workplace program at this time.]

6. Complete the Workplace Program Planning Chart (Appendix C) based on the consensus of the group for each item. In this process, consider the priorities identified by the workplace partner to verify that the program has a clear understanding of the expectations and the resources necessary to make it successful.

If resources are not available within the program, is there another adult education program in close proximity that could assist with the start-up and in the implementation of the program? If a partnership with another program is not possible, the adult education program manager should not

begin the workplace program and should arrange for the employer to connect with another program with the resources and expertise to deliver the requested services.

If additional professional development is needed, the program administrator must determine if there is sufficient time for individuals to participate in this training and still meet the employer timelines. If not, or if other resources are needed, the program administrator must consider the most appropriate steps to address weak or deficient areas

Once a program team has successfully completed the WRG assessment and determined that it is ready to offer workplace education programs, there are a number of resources available to guide programs through the planning and implementation process. One such guide is published by the Center of Education and Work, University of Wisconsin – Madison. The *Workplace Education Design Checklist: A Tool for Program Planning* (Manly, 1994). Another resource is the *Ohio Workplace Education Resource* Guide (Ohio Northwest ABLE Resource Center, 2001). Administrators/managers are encouraged to select these or other similar tools to assist them through the entire development and implementation of the program. In addition, it is useful to contact a more experienced neighboring program or the state department for some technical assistance before initial implementation. Finally, seek out mentor or peer advisors as they can offer tremendous assistance and support throughout the process of planning and implementing a workplace education program.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Employee Training Institute (ETI) Workplace Instructor Training
http://trainwitheti.com/products/webbased.html.
The web-based version provides a sample of some of the ten modules that appear in the ETI CD-ROM course.

James Madison University Workforce Development Campus http://wdc.jmu.edu.
The Workforce Development Campus provides basic education and training skills for the workplace and is designed for educators, trainers, and human resource professionals.

VESL Workplace Clearinghouse
http://www2.otan.dni.us/browse/index.cfm?fuseaction=view&catid=2942.
The Clearinghouse is part of the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN) and has a searchable database with links to workplace learning and vocational English as a Second Language materials.

Workforce Education Special Collection
http://worklink.coe.utk.edu/
The Workforce Education Special Collection is maintained by Southern LINCS and is a gateway to specialized information on high-quality literacy practices and materials for use in the workforce education.

APPENDIX A
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT READINESS

APPENDIX A

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT READINESS

CATEGORY	YES	NO	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
1.0. CONTEXT					
Is the adult education program					
1.1 Viewed as a strong resource by the community? Evidence: _____					
1.2 Operating in a structure that allows for innovation and flexibility? Evidence: _____					
Do program managers					
1.3 Recognize the workplace culture and how it differs from education? Evidence: _____					
1.4 Identify the demographics of the community and the workforce? Evidence: _____					
1.5 Have an awareness of related economic issues (e.g., business cycle, economic trends, job stability, workplace education costs)? Evidence: _____					

CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
1.6 Know the local and regional workforce? Evidence:_____ _____ _____					
1.7 Have an awareness of the politics (e.g., community, and company labor/management)? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
2.0. RESOURCES					
Fiscal: Does the program					
2.1 Have sufficient internal resources to initiate "start-up" programs? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
2.2 Access various funding streams? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
2.3 Manage fiscal resources responsibly? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
Personnel: Does the program have					
2.4 Support from upper management? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
2.5 Recruitment and hiring practices in place to support program growth? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					

CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
2.6 Staff with expertise to support a workplace program? Evidence: _____					
Technology: Does the program have					
2.7 Access to technology to support a workplace program? Evidence: _____					
3.0. LEADERSHIP: Do program managers					
3.1 Have a history of initiating and facilitating? Evidence: _____					
3.2 Initiate and monitor curricula customization to address needs? Evidence: _____					
3.3 Have experience in developing and implementing a successful marketing plan? Evidence: _____					
3.4 Select and/or train staff that have workplace knowledge and experience? Evidence: _____					

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CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
3.5 Work well with diverse groups of individuals in non-educational programs? Evidence: _____					
4. COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION: Do programs managers					
4.1 Facilitate collaborations within own organization? Evidence: _____					
4.2 Maintain collaborative relationships with other agencies in the community? Evidence: _____					
4.3 Maintain clear communication with program staff and external stakeholders? Evidence: _____					
4.4 Broker successful agreements with agencies and employers? Evidence: _____					

CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
5.0 ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION: Do program managers:					
5.1 Have a process in place to determine instructor experience and skills for delivering, assessing, and evaluating workplace instruction? Evidence: _____					
5.2 Provide professional development and resources necessary to ensure quality workplace instruction, assessment, and evaluation? Evidence: _____					
5.3 Have the skills and knowledge to evaluate the success of workplace professional development and related resources? Evidence: _____					

APPENDIX B
INSTRUCTOR READINESS

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTOR READINESS

CATEGORY	YES	NO	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
1.0 Context: Does the program have instructional staff who:					
1.1. Are aware of the workplace culture (e.g., management structure and company expectations)? Evidence: _____					
1.2. Recognize the politics of the workplace, including labor and management issues? Evidence: _____					
1.3. Are sensitive to diverse populations in non-traditional settings? Evidence: _____					
1.4. Are aware of the effects of change on the workplace (e.g., economic, demographic and organizational)? Evidence: _____					
1.5. Are sensitive to demands and responsibilities of adults in the workplace? Evidence: _____					

CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
1.6. Are aware of the issues surrounding workplace safety and security? Evidence: _____					
1.7. Recognize the differences between employer and employee needs and expectations? Evidence: _____					
2.0. RESOURCES: Does the program have instructional staff who:					
2.1. Use a variety of resources to enhance workplace instruction (e.g. realia and human resources)? Evidence: _____					
2.2. Integrate current media and technology as a tool for instruction? Evidence: _____					
3.0. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCE: Does the program have instructional staff who:					
3.1. Are skilled in teaching basic skills including thinking skills, problems solving, and decision-making? Evidence: _____					

CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
3.2. Have experience working in non-traditional educational settings? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
3.3. Have experience teaching in a workplace setting? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
3.4. Are able to customize curriculum and resource materials to meet the needs of the specific target audiences? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
3.5. Are able to adapt instructional practices to meet the needs of the workplace? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
3.6. Are able to use appropriate instructional strategies for adults in non-traditional settings with special needs? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
3.7. Adapt the physical and interpersonal climate to make it conducive to learning in a non-traditional educational setting (e.g. rapport and cultural sensitivity)? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					

CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
3.8. Provide frequent and varied opportunities to apply learning to the workplace setting? Evidence: _____					
4.0. COLLABORATION: Does the program have instructional staff who:					
4.1. Interact well with staff from professional organizations? (eg. CBO, government agencies, and not-for-profits) Evidence: _____					
4.2. Participate as a team member in non-educational settings? Evidence: _____					
Does the program have instructional staff who:					
5.1. Are able to determine skills and skill levels needed in non-traditional settings? Evidence: _____					
5.2. Are able to assess existing skills and knowledge in nontraditional settings? Evidence: _____					

CATEGORY			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED	RESOURCES NEEDED (WHO, WHAT, HOW)	TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION
5.3. Are able to determine gaps in skills and knowledge and provide appropriate instruction? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
5.4. Are able to prepare and disseminate information on student progress? Evidence: _____ _____ _____					
5.5. Are aware of confidentiality issues related to employer/employee communications Evidence: _____ _____ _____					

APPENDIX C
WORKPLACE PROGRAM PLANNING CHART

APPENDIX C

WORKPLACE PROGRAM PLANNING CHART

Directions
Based on responses to the instructor and management sections of this guide, complete the following chart. This activity should be completed collaboratively, by all stakeholders.

YES	NO	
		Program is currently ready to offer workplace education programs.
		Program is not ready to consider offering workplace education programs at this time.
		Program has a good start toward offering workplace education programs but needs to prioritize needs, delegate responsibility to address needs, identify strategies, and develop timelines. (See chart below)

Priority Needs	Person Responsible for Addressing Needs	Interventions/Strategies	Timeline

APPENDIX D
GLOSSARY

APPENDIX D

GLOSSARY

Basic Skills: Basic skills include reading, writing, performance of listening and speaking. Development or remedial training fundamental to the workplace; courses such as literacy, reading comprehension, writing, math, English as a second language, and learning how to learn (Van Buren & Erskine, 2002).

Equipped for the Future (EFF): A National Institute for Literacy project (NIFL) that has studied ways adults can become more effective workers, citizens, parents, and family members. EFF standards are divided into four categories: communication skills, decision-making skills, lifelong learning skills, and interpersonal skills.

Interpersonal Skills: Interpersonal skills include the ability to participate as a member of a team, teach others new skills, serve clients/customers, exercise leadership, negotiate, and work with diversity.

ISO: Series of standards agreed upon by the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) and a prerequisite for global competition. U.S. companies must meet ISO standards in order to compete in the international marketplace.

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award: Named after the late U.S. Secretary of Commerce, these awards recognize five companies each year that demonstrate outstanding quality management systems. The goal is to enhance the competitiveness, quality and productivity of U.S. organizations for the benefit of all citizens.

National Skill Standards Board (NSSB): A coalition from business, labor, education, and community and civil rights organizations founded in 1994 to establish a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment, and certification systems to help the U.S. workforce compete in a global economy.

NSSB Skill Scales Companion Guide: A publication examining both the work-oriented and the worker-oriented components of skill standards. It provides guidance on establishing the level of skill and knowledge required for each skill standard.

Personal Qualities: Personal qualities include the following traits — self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity, and honesty.

Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS): The commission was formed to advise the Secretary of Labor on the level of skills necessary to enter the workforce. The commission published two reports, *What Work Requires of Schools* and *Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance*. These two reports provide an outline of skills and competencies needed in today's workplace.

Thinking Skills: Thinking skills include the ability to think creatively, make decisions, solve problems, visualize and reason.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA): Signed into law in 1998, the Act consolidates and streamlines U.S. employment and training programs. WIA provides increased flexibility for state and local officials to assist workers with job search assistance, training, and advice.

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